

Ferropastoral Arborpastoral, Edaphopastoral

There is a lovely neologism Robert Crase created to describe Lorine Niedecker's poem "Lake Superior" in his essay "Niedecker and the Devotional Sublime." He calls "Lake Superior" "that spare ferropastoral of a poem in honor of the rock and mineral wealth [...]." There is much to think about in his essay, but *ferropastoral* seems to be at the top of the list.

It got me thinking that a saturation job that had some sense of place (& without a sense of now and here where are you anyway?) that place has rocks, trees, hydrology, flowers, plants, and even soil that sets it apart. I learned researching my poem *Neukom Vivarium Variations* that each state has a "state soil." No jodas. According to the USDA:

A state soil is a soil that has special significance to a particular state. Each state in the United States has selected a state soil, twenty of which have been legislatively established. These "Official State Soils" share the same level of distinction as official state flowers and birds. Also, representative soils have been selected for the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands¹.

So, a poem which highlights *soil* the way Niedecker's "Lake Superior" makes heroes of the rocks, could be an "Edaphopastoral." With the way corporate agriculture treats dirt,² this does not seem like such a bad idea. In fact the names of organisms living in any dirt universe could be part of a lively poem and would give the average reader "news that stays news." Yes, treating dirt like, well DIRT, is another attack on the "inorganic commonwealth" Crase writes of, more evidence that the bioregionalists

¹ <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/soils/edu/?cid=stelprdb1236841>

² <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/24/967376880/new-evidence-shows-fertile-soil-gone-from-midwestern-farms>

were right in the 70s when they said we live on this continent like invaders. Here's your chance to do a little to correct that.

Pick from the following category list (or add your own) and find as much material on it as you can. A true saturation job will take years, but you have to start somewhere.

Ferropastoral - local rocks

Arborpastoral - local trees

Edaphopastoral - local dirt

Florapastoral - local plants

Faunapastoral - local animals

Hydropastoral - local waters, lakes, rivers, creeks, &c.

The perfect saturation job has all these and ones we've yet to articulate. Your task is to write a poem from one of these categories. Maybe the focus is on one particular kind of, say, tree. Go to Wikipedia, to your local library, to your local Audubon Society and see what resources there are for that topic. When you find a real tree geek (or soil geek, or water geek) you may be surprised how excited they'll be when you tell them you are writing an "Arborpastoral." Make sure you spend some time with the actual tree to see if you can start thinking like it as Niedecker would have you thinking "like Lake Superior."

This one will go nicely in my FLEXIBLE MIND:

THE MADRONE

I'd say

SERIOUS

as John Cleese
says

“THE LARCH.”

Waxy, year-round
leaves, blossoms

some see as

CONSTELLATIONS

trunk/branches angle out
for what
sun there is in the
Cascadia summer.

Don't peel them she says
but who doesn't
like to see

THE TAN LINES

who doesn't like
to be

SCRATCHED

now
&
again?

dis-tā'-tsi

in the bearberry
distance.

On the coast. North of

Santa Barbara.
Gulf Islands
& south.

I
WILL
NOT
EAT

bearberry but

will burn a pinch of bark
awaken ancestors
petition them to keep shade

OFF OUR SHINY SKIN!

3:53PM

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